ENVIRONMENTAL Update
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
Winter 2002/2003

Innovative Project Recycles Tires, Improves Road Surface

A pilot project completed in September on Interstate 80 demonstrates an innovative use for scrap tires. Over 47,000 scrap tires have been blended into an asphalt mix in the resurfacing of seven miles of I-80 between Gibbon and Shelton.

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality awarded a grant to the Nebraska Department of Roads to conduct this pilot project to test an asphalt rubber mixture. The mixture includes scrap tires generated in Nebraska which have been ground into fine particles.

The grant compensates the Department of Roads for the extra costs that the agency is incurring to develop and test this new mixture, when compared to the price of simply laying traditional asphalt, said Steve Danahy, Supervisor of DEQ's Waste Planning and Aid Unit. DEQ and Roads officials expect that the costs incurred with rubberized asphalt will come down as more projects are pursued.

A mixture of asphalt and rubber from recycled tires being applied to Interstate 80 between Gibbon and Shelton. Photo by Brian McManus

"We feel it's an effective method of dealing with scrap tires, because it not only consumes a large number of tires, but there is a definite and measurable benefit when compared to conventional asphalt," Danahy said. "Rubberized asphalt not only recycles tires but improves roads."

It is expected that this rubber asphalt mixture will extend the life of the asphalt overlay, and will be less prone to cracking. And, if a similar project completed last year on Highway 2 in Lincoln is any indication, drivers will find that the new portion of roadway will provide a quieter, smoother ride for their vehicles.

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A Message From The Director

Mike Linder

Thirty years ago marked the beginning of many significant aspects of environmental protection.

Many of the major national environmental laws were enacted at that time, leading to important changes in the way we protect our natural resources. Nebraska's natural resources districts (NRDs) were established, creating an effective method for communities to deal with environmental issues at the local level. The year 1972 also marked the beginning of the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

Throughout the 30 years of our existence, DEQ has had the same basic mission – to protect and enhance the natural resources of our state. Although this is a job that will never be fully completed, there is significant progress being made in many areas.

- Our air is significantly cleaner than it was in 1972. For example, lead levels in air are a small fraction of what they used to be, due in large part to lead being removed from gasoline. Likewise, restrictions placed on industries that produce various airborne compounds have led to overall improved air quality.

- Nebraska used to have hundreds of unlicensed open dumps all across the state. Today, we have 23 permitted municipal waste landfills that are designed and operated to be protective of the environment. We now have much greater oversight on where waste is being placed, and how it is being handled.

- Recycling and waste reduction have become much more common practices across the state. Innovative ideas are turning trash to useful products – a good example is our page 1 story about how tires are being used to improve our roadways.

- Thousands of underground petroleum tanks were found to be leaking into our environment. There are now more stringent rules to prevent tanks from contaminating the environment. We're also making significant progress in cleaning up those sites where contamination has occurred.

- There are more stringent requirements limiting what can be emitted into the air and discharged into our rivers and streams. We're also conducting more widespread monitoring of our surface water and groundwater to determine how our activities are impacting these resources. We now work with the NRDs to find cooperative ways of reducing these impacts in a region.

- Millions of dollars are being allocated annually in Nebraska to support recycling and waste reduction, lake restoration projects, and loans to communities for wastewater and drinking water system improvements. DEQ's grant and loan programs are important investments at the local level in improving the quality of our environment.

Obviously, we still have a long way to go in protecting our environment. And we need to be wise in how we approach environmental issues. Several examples in this issue point to success through cooperation. There is a current saying in business that we need to "do more with less." I like to say we need to do more with more – more partners, that is. All in all, as we look back on what has been accomplished in the past 30 years, we can definitely say that we're making progress and heading in the right direction.

Innovative Project...continued

Robert Rea of the Department of Roads said both the I-80 and Highway 2 projects have demonstrated that there are no "laydown problems" with this rubberized mixture – that is, this mixture is as easy for road crews to apply as conventional asphalt. Rea said that they are continuing to examine all aspects of the mixture to develop the optimal blend for Nebraska. One aspect being examined is whether to grind the rubber into even finer granules, to ensure maximum durability in Nebraska's "wet and nasty winters."

Ultimately, the rubberized asphalt mix could become cost competitive to conventional mixes, Rea said. He said that the first step is to get greater involvement with Nebraska contractors in this innovative approach. In the initial pilot projects, the Roads department brought in contractors from Arizona who had experience with the rubber blending process. This contributed to higher costs. However, the actual mix design, production and paving of the new mixture was performed by a local contractor, Dobson Bros. Construction Company of Lincoln. Through these pilot projects, Nebraska has been acquiring considerable practical knowledge about the process, and Rea said he hopes the state will soon undertake new projects that will include the rubber blending process with local contractors.

The other reason that this could become a cost-effective alternative is due to expected greater durability of the roadways. If the roadways require less maintenance, and if they do not have to be resurfaced as often, then this would yield substantial long-term cost savings, Rea said.

Future projects could also help to reduce a serious scrap tire waste problem in Nebraska, Danahy said. Nebraskans generate the equivalent of about 3.5 million scrap passenger tires every year, and tires are banned from being disposed of in landfills. Although there are other innovative on-going scrap tire projects funded by the state, there are far more scrap tires being generated than recycled annually in Nebraska.

The end result is that the majority of Nebraska's scrap tires are being exported out of the state for disposal – which is both expensive and a waste of resources. Conceivably, road resurfacing projects could greatly reduce this scrap tire problem.

And, the recycling benefits don't have to stop there, Danahy said. "Rubberized asphalt itself can easily be recycled again when the road is eventually resurfaced."

Article by Brian McManus

Photo by Brian McManus

How to Contact Us

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions for future topics for this newsletter, please contact the Public Information Office.

Phone: (402) 471-2186
Address: 1200 N St., Box 98922,
Lincoln, NE 68509-8922
E-mail: moreinfo@ndeq.state.ne.us
Web site: www.deq.state.ne.us

From A Mudhole To A Beautiful Lake

Cooperation, innovative solutions key to Valentine Mill Pond renovation success

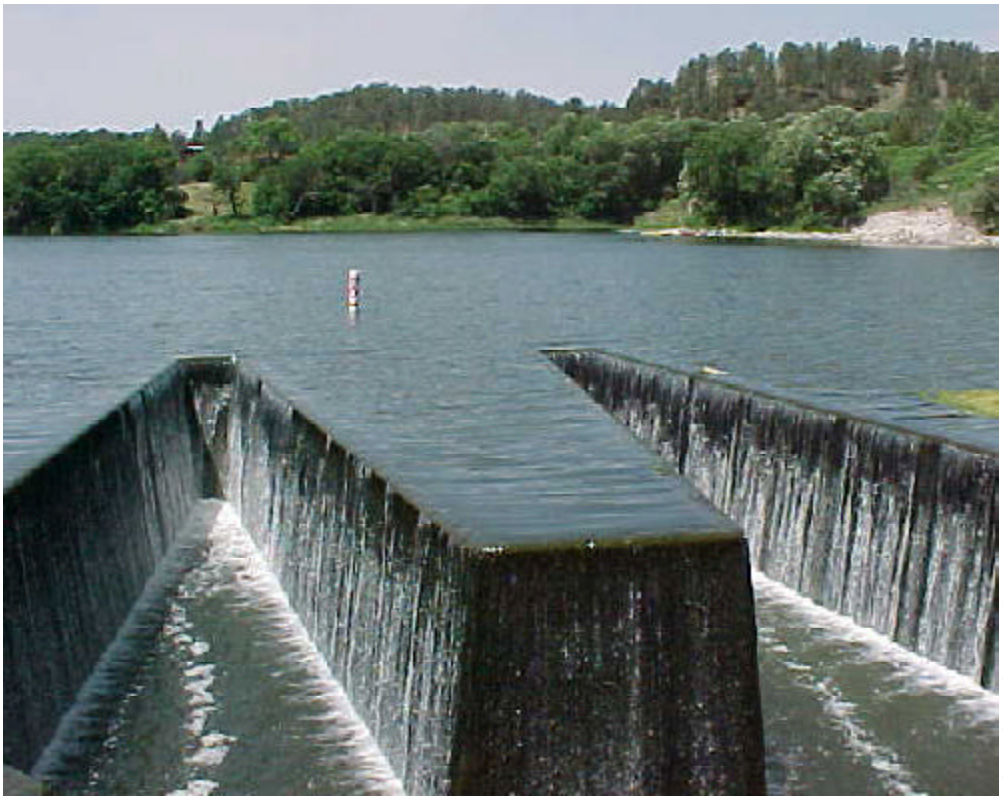

Photo by John Bender

The labyrinth spillway at the renovated Valentine Mill Pond.

In the early days of the 20th century, a visitor to Valentine's mill pond might have seen fishermen trying their luck, and swimmers splashing in the pond's cool, clear waters. If the visitor could have returned as the century came to a close, the pond might have been unrecognizable. In the intervening years, it had shrunk from more than 30 acres to less than 15. Exposed mud bars revealed the excessive sediment that filled the pond and put an end to fishing and swimming.

The loss of the mill pond as a recreational site led some local residents in the 1970s to begin talking about renovation. It was the early 1990s, though, before the first funds were allocated to begin the process. What followed over the next decade was a textbook example of what is possible when state and local agencies and officials, private companies and consultants, and local residents work together toward a common goal.

Too Much Sand

The numerous Valentine-area residents who gathered in June 2002 to dedicate the public opening of the Valentine Mill Pond saw a sight nobody in the area had seen for many years – 25 acres of cool, clear water beckoning boaters, swimmers, and fishermen. Perhaps not since S.F. Gilman constructed a dam and created the mill pond to power a grist mill in the early 1890s had the pond looked more inviting on a hot summer day.

Valentine Mayor Neil Wescott remarked at the dedication ceremony that the pond "went from a mud hole to a beautiful lake." The process of transforming the mud hole began in the early 1990s. In 1994, funding for a study of the lake became available under the Clean Lakes Program administered by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The Middle Niobrara Natural Resources District (NRD) conducted the study, called a diagnostic feasibility study. The results indicated that the primary water quality concern was the amount of sand being deposited in the pond (soil in the Valentine area is high in sand content) by the flow of Minnechaduza Creek, the pond's water source.

"The problems were associated with natural bedload," said Paul Brakhage, DEQ Clean Lakes Program Coordinator. "This is sand that rolls along the bottom of a stream. When it reaches the lake, it settles out and builds up. It was estimated that 60 tons of sediment were being deposited daily. By 1995, only ten acres of the pond were greater than two feet deep."

As a result of the study, the mill pond was added to DEQ's Section 303(d) list of impaired waters. The "official" impairment was to aquatic life, but it was obvious to all that recreation was also seriously impacted by the lake's excessive sediment. With the pond's obvious problems well known locally, and its specific problems now documented, the Middle Niobrara NRD began the task of addressing the problems. NRD Manager Bob Hilske (currently manager of the Nemaha NRD), organized a team of state and local officials, consultants, and local residents to plan the restoration of the pond. "Without the cooperation of the many individuals and groups that participated in the project, it would have never been completed," Hilske said.

Dredging, or deepening, the lake was necessary, but that alone would not solve the excessive sedimentation problems.

DEQ's Role

In addition to funding assistance, DEQ also offered technical assistance to the Valentine Mill Pond restoration project. Staff assisted in developing applications for funding, assisted in project design, and now oversee on-going water quality monitoring of the pond. Monitoring results to date have shown that expected improvements in water quality are occurring. Solids suspended in the water have been reduced 72 percent, and the amount of phosphorus is down 30 percent. The clarity of the water has also greatly improved.

"We will monitor the pond to determine if improvements in water quality continue, and to determine the effectiveness of the sediment control measures," said Paul Brakhage, DEQ Clean Lakes Program Coordinator. "The Middle Niobrara NRD and DEQ will also conduct monitoring in 2003 to determine the reductions in the amount of sediment entering the pond."

"Sedimentation is probably the biggest maintenance problem we face in building reservoirs in Nebraska," added NRD manager Bob Hilske. "If we can prove that hydrosuction is effective, it will be a great tool to help us deal with this concern."

The lake's shorelines would need to be stabilized. The project's prime engineering consultant, Olsson Associates, also established two primary goals to ensure the rehabilitation of the lake and dam: upgrade the dam to meet the standards of a low hazard structure, and develop and implement a plan to reduce future sedimentation.

First In The World?

To accomplish these goals and stay within the project's budget, unique and innovative solutions were implemented. One solution was the addition of a labyrinth spillway to the dam (see photo previous page). "The labyrinth spillway has been used two or three dozen times in the world, but never in Nebraska, or the Plains for that matter" said Daryoush Razavian, project manager and vice president of Olsson Associates. The long spillway compressed into a small space "allows large flood events to pass without manually or mechanically opening gates," Razavian said. "Essentially, the labyrinth spillway functions without any maintenance or operation."

The most innovative feature to be built into the renovated pond and dam is now hidden from sight as boaters cruise the blue waters above. To prevent excessive sedimentation from reoccurring, an innovative solution was necessary. To address the unique problems of the Valentine Mill Pond, Rollin Hotchkiss, Ph.D., director of the Albrook Hydraulics Lab at Washington State University, was brought to the project as a special consultant to Olsson Associates. Dr. Hotchkiss, formerly with the University of Nebraska, had conducted research involving the "hydrosuction sediment removal system," commonly referred to as HSRS.

Olsson Associates designed the system to capture sediment as it enters the pond, and transport it via a pipeline underneath the pond bed and around the dam to be discharged back into Minnechaduza Creek, without the use of external energy. "The system was also designed with the capability of collecting, through hydrosuction dredging, the sediment that was not captured by the bypass system," said Razavian. "To our knowledge the sediment removal system implemented at the Mill Pond is the first system operating in the world capable of both bypassing and dredging sediment."

A Pond Of Dreams

S.F. Gilman certainly never could have envisioned that his dam and pond would one day boast a world-class distinction. His interest was in capturing water to power his mill, but with the mill now long retired the interest of area residents has turned to recreational opportunities. With some engineering assistance, S.F. Gilman's mill pond lives on for yet another generation to enjoy. "Build it, they will come" may have referred to a baseball field of dreams, but it could easily apply to the Valentine Mill Pond as well. And they will be coming to enjoy the pond for many years.

Article by Rich Webster

Some project facts:

Project Partners

City of Valentine
Middle Niobrara NRD
Nebraska Public Power District
Cherry County
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mill Pond landowners

Sediment Removed

110,000 cubic yards moved off site
50,000 cubic yards used on site

Total Project Cost

$1,649,000

Project Design Team

Olsson Associates, Prime Consultant
Nickel Engineering, Geotechnical Subconsultant
Dr. Rollin Hotchkiss, Special Consultant

Year of Clean Water Celebrated

Norris High School FFA Receives National Honors

October 2002 marked the 30th anniversary of the enactment of the Clean Water Act. This anniversary served as a milestone in the nation's efforts to protect our water resources, and also presented an opportunity to enhance the public's appreciation for the importance of our water resources. The America's Clean Water Foundation, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization, led a series of events to commemorate the anniversary. These events were designed to celebrate our successes as a nation in addressing water quality issues, and to build a better understanding of the remaining water quality challenges and solutions.

As part of the kick-off for the 30th anniversary, America's Clean Water Foundation and the Smithsonian Institution hosted a National Youth Watershed Summit October 6-10. The summit was held at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Edgewater, Maryland. Students from Norris High School, located near Lincoln in Lancaster County, were chosen by Gov. Mike Johanns to attend the summit and represent Nebraska.

The Norris students were chosen due to the Norris FFA's involvement in a two-year project called *Safe Water Tomorrow Through Pollution Prevention Today.* The project was originally developed and sponsored by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department. Assisting the students were additional partners, including Norris High School, the Lancaster and Gage county extension offices, the Lower Platte South, Lower Big Blue, and Nemaha natural resources districts, the Groundwater Foundation, and the Lancaster County Groundwater Guardian team.

Photo provided by Norris Public Schools

Norris High School FFA members collect samples at "Test Your Well Night."

Safe Water Tomorrow Through Pollution Prevention Today was developed as a method of teaching rural and farm residents about activities that can help protect groundwater, the source of drinking water for most rural Nebraskans. When it became apparent that the program needed to be expanded, the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department asked the Norris FFA to assist. Initially, Norris students assisted in revising a checklist used to educate rural residents about pollution prevention practices. The students also helped develop information for a CD-Rom to teach students about groundwater, point and nonpoint source groundwater contamination, how to complete the checklist, and how to collect water samples to test for nitrates and other contaminants.

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act, one of the first and most successful national environmental laws, set the goal of restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. In the past three decades, Clean Water Act programs have yielded measurable improvements in water quality throughout the nation. Streams that were once devoid of fish and other aquatic life now support numerous and varied aquatic populations. The water quality of numerous lakes that were once choked by pollution is now vastly improved. Point source discharges from municipal and industrial sources are being controlled. Yet, much remains to be done to achieve the goals of the Act and ensure that the nation's waters are "fishable and swimmable."

Following training involving groundwater and pollution prevention topics, and the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment, Norris FFA members began contacting rural residents of southern Lancaster and northern Gage counties. The residents were asked to participate in the *Safe Water Tomorrow Through Pollution Prevention Today* program. The students assisted the residents in completing the pollution prevention checklist. They also located the resident's drinking water well using GPS, and collected a sample from the well. The well location data the students collected was then used to produce a map showing the location and nitrate level of each well tested.

The Norris students also visited local communities and conducted several activities involving the public. They hosted five "Test Your Well" nights in which students asked area residents to bring water samples to be tested for the presence of nitrates. Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department officials were available at these sessions to answer water quality-related questions.

Communities were also asked to participate in and sponsor an event called "Find A Well Day." Students, with the endorsement and support of the local governing board, went door-to-door asking residents about the presence of abandoned wells that needed to be decommissioned (permanently sealed). If a resident elected to decommission a well, the appropriate natural resources district (NRD) was contacted and arrangements made. NRDs provide cost-share funds to pay for a portion of well decommissioning costs, and the well owner is usually responsible for the remainder of the cost. The *Safe Water Tomorrow Through Pollution Prevention Today* project offered reimbursement to the well owner to cover the remaining costs not paid for by the NRD.

Photo by Brian McManus

Norris FFA members being congratulated by Governor Mike Johanns for their accomplishments at the Youth Watershed Summit.

Norris FFA members discuss their project with a judge at the Youth Watershed Summit.

Photo provided by Norris Public Schools

Norris students Adam Schaaf, Cory Hart, Dustin Doeschot, Katie Jenkins, and their advisor Kristyn Harms represented the Norris FFA at the Youth Watershed Summit. Approximately 200 students attended, representing 46 states and the District of Columbia. Students learned about research techniques used to study watersheds and discussed technical policy issues related to clean water and watershed protection. Students also collected specimens from Chesapeake Bay, canoed on one of its tributaries, and learned about species threatened with extinction because of water pollution in the bay.

The Norris group presented its *Safe Water Tomorrow Through Pollution Prevention Today* project to a panel of judges. When the winning projects were announced, Nebraska's representatives had placed third, with Nevada second and Maine taking top honors. The judges cited the Norris presentation for its clearness, and for the project's unique focus on public involvement.

On November 8th, Gov. Johanns met with the Norris students to congratulate them for their 3rd place finish, and their outstanding representation of Nebraska at the Youth Watershed Summit. Gov. Johanns also thanked them for their efforts in improving water quality in the state.

For additional information about the "Safe Water Tomorrow Through Pollution Prevention Today" project, contact John Chess, Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Dept., 3140 N St., Lincoln, NE 68510 Phone (402) 441-8000

Article by Francina Berney and Rich Webster

DEQ Discusses Results of Broken Bow Monitors

After two years of air quality monitoring in the Broken Bow area, Department of Environmental Quality staff have concluded that the ambient air quality is not in violation of either particulate or Total Reduced Sulfur (TRS) standards.

On July 2, DEQ staff attended a local citizens' group meeting in Broken Bow to discuss the agency's air quality monitoring results. Staff informed the group that the monitoring in Broken Bow would be discontinued in the fall, since results have shown compliance with air standards.

For the past two years, monitors in Broken Bow have measured PM_{10} and TRS. The PM_{10} monitors measure for particulates, such as dust, which are smaller than 10 microns in diameter. When inhaled, PM_{10} can cause adverse impacts, especially to susceptible people such as the elderly, children, or those who have asthma.

Photo by Brian McManus

Jim Sexson of DEQ's West Central Field Office changes the filter on a particulate monitor in Broken Bow.

Two PM_{10} monitors were installed due to citizens' concerns about excessive dust in the area. The TRS monitor measures the levels of Total Reduced Sulfur, which includes hydrogen sulfide. A TRS monitor was installed in response to citizen concerns that odors in the area may include hydrogen sulfide, which could also be a health concern. (DEQ regulates TRS based on health concerns, but the state does not regulate odor. See related story below.)

Continued on next page...

Odors:
An on-going air concern, but not directly regulated by state

Although our noses may tell us that an odor is offensive and an air quality concern, there are some compelling reasons why odor is not the basis for state and federal air quality regulations.

State and federal regulations are based on health concerns, because compounds that pose known health risks are a more imminent concern to public welfare than those that are solely an odor issue.

In addition, it is more scientifically justifiable to establish limits based on the protection of public health, than to try to establish more subjective odor standards. People can have markedly different perceptions about the magnitude and offensiveness of an odor, based on their sense of smell. And, although work continues to be conducted on developing techniques to measure odors, state officials do not believe current methods are precise enough to be used as the basis for regulations and enforcement.

Odors can be caused by a combination of many compounds. Many of these compounds are not regulated by the state, either because they have no health-based concerns associated with them, or because research is still inconclusive about their potential health effects. However, odors may be regulated on a local level, depending on whether the local government has adopted nuisance regulations relating to odor.

Continued on next page...

Odors...continued

Livestock Odor Issues

Because the state recognizes the valid concerns that the public has regarding odor, the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality's Agriculture Section is making efforts to address the problem at the "front end" of the process — permitting. When a livestock operation applies for a permit to build a new facility or expand an existing facility, they must submit a plan describing Best Management Practices* to minimize odors from the livestock operation.

"There are specific aspects in the design, operation and maintenance of a livestock operation that can reduce the amount of odor being generated," said Dennis Heitmann, DEQ's Agriculture Section Supervisor. "This is an evolving issue, and we will work with the livestock industry as new methods of odor reduction are developed. Additionally, there are a number of universities, including UNL, that are very active in the examination of odors and the associated control techniques."

Total Reduced Sulfur (TRS)

Some pollutants that are regulated by the state have associated odors. For example, DEQ regulates Total Reduced Sulfur (TRS), which can be detected by its rotten egg odor. Sources of TRS include wastewater treatment plants, livestock operations, and tanneries. However, the public should be forewarned that just because a livestock facility smells, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is violating TRS standards.

"Although livestock facilities can produce TRS, our monitoring to date has found that these levels typically are well within our health standards," said Shelley Kaderly, Administrator of Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality's Air Quality Division. "For example, two years of data from a TRS monitor located near the largest feedlot in the state showed no violations of the health-based TRS standard. Most of the time, the readings were negligible, although we have received numerous complaints about odor." (See related story on previous page.)

Complaint Investigations

Although DEQ does not regulate odors, the department will investigate some types of odor complaints. If DEQ determines that the complaint is in regard to a pollutant that the state regulates, DEQ staff document it and contact the alleged source. However, unless the source is in violation of a permit condition or regulation, the state cannot require the source to take corrective action.

If DEQ believes the odor complaint is not related to a regulated pollutant, the complainant is referred to local authorities regarding the applicability of a local nuisance ordinance, if one exists. If an odor complaint is received regarding a livestock operation that has a odor management plan in its state operating permit, DEQ staff will investigate to determine whether the facility is properly following their plan. If requested, the complainant is notified of the action taken in respect to a complaint investigated by the DEQ.

** The Guidance Document "Best Management Practices for Odor Control", NDEQ, March 2000 provides information on available odor control practices and technologies for livestock operations. This document is provided to all permit applicants for livestock waste control facilities.*

DEQ has also produced an air quality Fact Sheet (Odors, NDEQ, September 2002) that contains information about odor sources, and the department's regulation of certain pollutants that have odors.

The Guidance Document and Fact Sheet are both available on DEQ's web site – www.deq.state.ne.us — or by calling DEQ's Lincoln or field offices.

Article by Brian McManus

Results of monitors...continued

Throughout 30 months of data collection, the PM_{10} monitors indicated compliance with daily and yearly National Ambient Air Quality Standards for particulates. There also were no violations of the state's ambient standards for TRS during the two years that the TRS monitor was in operation in Broken Bow.

DEQ officials told the group that although the monitoring did not reveal levels of PM_{10} and TRS above levels established to protect public health, the public's concerns relating to livestock facilities and air quality would continue to be examined. They said that nationally, there is a significant amount of research under way on these issues and the state will stay abreast of this research. The state will continue to work with the community and area producers to try to find solutions to their air quality concerns.

Article by Brian McManus

NRD/DEQ Liaison —

A New Era in Coordination, Communication

2002 marked the beginning of a new era in local and state cooperation on environmental and natural resources issues. On May 30, Dick Ehrman of DEQ's Ground Water Unit assumed a new role as NRD/DEQ Liaison. This position was created to establish and maintain communication and coordination between the state's 23 natural resources districts (NRDs) and DEQ.

In his new position, Ehrman may work with any program at DEQ, but will focus on water quality programs, including nonpoint source management, wellhead protection, Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), ground and surface water monitoring, and Ground Water Management Areas. He will be especially involved in helping the NRDs implement conservation planning at the watershed area, and basin levels.

Ehrman believes that in his new role he will be able to assist in more comprehensive environmental protection and also help eliminate duplication at a time when everyone is concerned with budget issues. "It's vital to make sure that these two entities are working together toward the same goal," he said. "I also believe that the NRDs and DEQ can learn a great deal from each other's viewpoints and experiences. My position will provide a common point of contact for the agency and the districts to achieve this coordination and learning."

Ehrman has worked at DEQ with a variety of groundwater programs since 1987. The new position is something of a return to his "roots" as he began his professional career in the mid-1980s with the Central Platte NRD. "I'm very excited to be able to help the NRDs do their jobs better by accessing the resources and expertise here at DEQ," he said. "On a personal level, I've been very fortunate over the years in developing working relationships and friendships with a lot of great people at DEQ and the various NRDs, so I'm really happy to be able to continue those relationships, all the while doing a job that I really enjoy."

NRD/DEQ Liaison Dick Ehrman

Dick Ehrman grew up in northwest Nebraska on an irrigated farm. He has bachelor's degrees in geology and history from Chadron State College, and a master's degree in geology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He is currently a member of the Nebraska Board of Geology, and is an adjunct Assistant Professor of Geology at Doane College in Crete.

Article by Francina Berney

NPDES General Permit Proposed For Livestock Producers

Public hearings to be held January 14 and 30

The Department of Environmental Quality is proposing to issue a General Permit for open lot livestock operations under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Two public hearings will be held in January, in North Platte and Lincoln.

NPDES permits are currently required for all facilities in the state that directly discharge pollutants to waters of the state. Some open lot livestock operations have the potential to discharge waste to state waters during times of excessive precipitation, so these facilities have been required to obtain NPDES permits to restrict discharges and ensure compliance with department regulations. The proposed General Permit would prohibit discharges to waters of the state, with potential exceptions in cases where facilities are impacted by either a 25-year, 24-hour rainfall event or a chronic wet period.

The public hearings will be held at the following locations:
January 14 – North Platte, at the McDonald Belton Campus (theater), Mid Plains Community College, 601 West State Farm Road, 7 p.m.
January 30 – Lincoln, at the Lancaster County Extension Office, 444 Cherrycreek Road, 7 p.m.

New Office, New Duties

DEQ Chadron office to share space with NRD

When Dave Carlson moved his computer and boxes of belongings to his new office at the Upper Niobrara-White Natural Resources District (NRD) building in December, he joined two other DEQ field offices located at NRD offices. The arrangement makes good sense, says DEQ Field Office Supervisor Julie Powers.

"Sharing space with local agencies that are involved in protecting the natural resources of the state makes sense," she said. "We are looking for ways to combine resources and work cooperatively to benefit everyone involved, particularly during these tight economic times."

DEQ's Chadron office, officially designated the Panhandle Field Office – Chadron, has been open for business since 1983. Dave Carlson joined the agency in 1988 to staff the office and conduct compliance monitoring at the nearby Crow Butte uranium mine. Monitoring activities at the mine remain Carlson's primary emphasis, but his duties have expanded and now include conducting complaint investigations, solid waste facility inspections, surface water sampling, and community outreach activities throughout the northern panhandle, and east through Cherry and Brown counties.

Dave Carlson
Panhandle Field Office – Chadron

The southern half of the panhandle is overseen by John Flint, out of the Panhandle Field Office - Scottsbluff. Having two DEQ staff in far west Nebraska has proven to be invaluable in staying in touch with western Nebraska issues, said Julie Powers.

"Our primary goals when establishing the Panhandle Field Office were to provide better environmental protection, and to be more responsive to the people living in western Nebraska," she said.

Article by Rich Webster

To contact the Panhandle Field Office – Chadron:

David Carlson
Nebraska Dept. of Environmental Quality
430 East Second St.
Chadron, NE 69337

Phone: (308) 432-6110

Newsletter Readers' Response

leads to reduction in paper use

By nearly a two-to-one margin, the readers of the Environmental Update are opting to view this publication on their computers, rather than having a paper copy mailed to them. The agency received over 1900 responses to a September mailing that gave readers the option of either continuing to receive a paper copy of the newsletter, or receiving an e-mail notification of new editions of the Environmental Update. Nearly 1200 readers selected e-mail notification.

Under the new option, if readers provide us their e-mail address, DEQ will notify them whenever a new edition is posted on our web site, and provide a link so that they can immediately access the electronic version of the newsletter. This will result in considerable savings in postage and newsletter production, and most importantly, it will substantially reduce paper usage.

If you missed out on the original mailing, and would like to receive e-mail notification rather than a paper copy of the newsletter, simply send an e-mail note to moreinfo@ndeq.state.ne.us. (Please indicate if you are a new subscriber, or want to have your name removed from receiving a paper copy through the mail.) Or you can send this information to: Environmental Update, P.O. Box 98922, Lincoln, NE 68509-8922.

Article by Brian McManus

Environmental Quality Council

Several changes to the Environmental Quality Council (EQC) have occurred recently. The EQC is the body responsible for adopting the rules and regulations that set air quality, water quality, and waste management standards to protect the health and welfare of Nebraskans.

Long-time member and council Chair Fred Hlava, who served on the council for 17 years, resigned when appointed by Gov. Mike Johanns to represent the 49th district in the Nebraska Legislature. "We will miss Fred's leadership and depth of knowledge on environmental issues," said Mike Linder, Department of Environmental Quality Director. "Fred dedicated his years on the council to ensuring that proposed regulations were subject to a proper hearing, and that all interested parties were heard."

James Whitaker, mayor of North Platte, was chosen by Gov. Johanns to replace Hlava in representing Municipal Government. Richard Sommer of Chadron, representing the Ag Processing Industry, assumed the position of Chair of the council, and Bill Podraza of Columbus, representing the Power Generating Industry, has been elected Vice-Chair.

The EQC meets quarterly, in March, June, September, and December. Dates and locations for 2003 meetings have yet to be finalized, but will be posted on the DEQ web site (www.deq.state.ne.us) as soon as they are available. Other council members are:

Michael Bair, Aurora
Municipal Government

John Baker, Scottsbluff
Professional Engineer

Dr. Janet Bernard, North Platte
Physician

Robert Bettger, Fairmont
Agricultural Crop Production

Robert Blobaum, Blair
Chemical Industry

Vaughn Blum, Schuyler
Food Products Manufacturing

Robert Gottsch, Hastings
Livestock Industry

Darlene Kiefer, Kimball
Public at Large

Norman Nelson, Fremont
Heavy Industry

Steven Oltmans, Omaha
Conservation

Jodi Thompson, Imperial
County Government

Mark Whitehead, Lincoln
Automotive/Petroleum Industry

Terry Zahn, Sr., Omaha
Labor

Article by Francina Berney and Rich Webster

Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 98922
Lincoln, NE 68509-8922